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SUBJECT: Agreement on Financing of Jewish Cemetery Renovation and Maintenance

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1.(U) At a December 21 meeting in the Federal Chancellery, hosted by Chancellor Werner Faymann and Vice-Chancellor Josef Proell, federal and Vienna and Lower Austrian provincial government representatives reached an agreement with Jewish Community (IKG) President Ariel Muzicant on financing the renovation and maintenance of Jewish cemeteries. In compliance with the January 2001 U.S.-Austrian "Washington Agreement," which called for Austria to "provide additional support for the restoration and maintenance of Jewish cemeteries," the federal government will provide a total of EUR 20 million over the next 20 years via a fund for the restoration of Jewish cemeteries. An additional EUR 20 million will be provided by provinces, EU project money, as well as the IKG. The Lower Austrian provincial government has agreed to contribute 25 percent of the cost for restoration projects in the province; the Burgenland provincial government is reportedly considering a similar contribution. The City of Vienna has agreed to provide 500,000 Euro for the restoration of the Waehring cemetery.

2.(U) IKG President Ariel Muzicant thanked the GOA for the "Chanukkah present." Regarding maintenance, Muzicant announced that a large number of the roughly 50 towns with Jewish cemeteries had already agreed to maintain the cemeteries. Muzicant indicated that a contract will now be concluded with these communities obliging them to maintain the cemeteries.

Comment

3.(SBU) The agreement follows a nearly 9-year dispute over the implementation of the Washington Agreement's provision on Jewish cemeteries, in the course of which federal and provincial representatives sought to put responsibility for the cemeteries on the other. The current coalition government had included a stipulation on the Jewish cemeteries in its coalition agreement. With yesterday's agreement, it has met its commitment.